

# What Determines the Tenure of Cabinet Members? A Comparative Study of Korea and the United States, 1948-2013\*

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the determinants of the tenure of cabinet members in Korea and the United States from 1948 to 2013. It concentrates on three sets of factors that can affect the tenure of cabinet members: the personal characteristics of the cabinet member, his or her political characteristics, and the characteristics of the president under whom the cabinet member serves. This article finds that some of the personal and political characteristics of the cabinet member affect the length of a minister's tenure in Korea. However, these same characteristics do not affect the length of tenure of cabinet members in the United States, although the characteristics of the president do have an impact on the tenure length of cabinet members in both Korea and the United States. The mix of a presidential system with a parliamentary system in Korea perhaps accounts for difference between the two countries. Therefore, this article raises the possibility that the theories and practices of public administration and political science in the United States may not be applicable in Korea.

**Keywords:** tenure, cabinet members, minister, secretary, president, political appointment

## INTRODUCTION

Cabinet ministers play a very significant role in making policy decisions and implementing policies in government (Kim, 1994; Huber & Martinez-Gallardo, 2008).<sup>1</sup>

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They are largely responsible for the work of ministry and negotiate the primary policies of government in cabinet meetings. Thus, their position has both a managerial aspect and a political aspect (Keman, 1991; Hahm, Jung & Lee, 2013).

In spite of the importance of cabinet ministers to the government, the ministerial tenure of Korea is very short. The average length of ministerial tenure in Korea is about 13.84 months, much less than in many other countries. An excessively short ministerial tenure may have costs, including undermining continuity in the government and teamwork between ministries as well as within a ministry (Heclo, 1978; Wood & Marchbanks, 2008). As a result, the president under whom a minister serves may lose control over the bureaucracy.

Ministers are chosen for various reasons. Some ministers may stand out as experts in the management of their field, and others may be very skilled at dealing with the legislative branch. Newly appointed ministers are expected to perform their job better than the former minister. Therefore, the tenure of ministers can be one of the indicators of their performance (Berlinski, Dewan, & Dowding, 2007). To analyze the determinants of the minister's tenure may prove revelatory.

However, little is known about the determinants of the ministerial tenure in Korea. The literature on ministers in Korea needs more systematic analysis. The Korean Constitution states that the president serves as the leader of the executive branch, a provision deeply affected by the U.S. Constitution. In the United States, research shows that while the characteristics of cabinet members have little impact on their tenure, the characteristics of the president have a powerful impact (Cohen, 1986).

This article empirically examines the determinants of the tenure of cabinet members in Korea and the United States from 1948 to 2013, employing the proportional hazards model. It concentrates on three sets of factors that can affect the tenure of cabinet members: the personal characteristics of a cabinet member, the political characteristics of a cabinet member, and the characteristics of the appointing president. It finds that some of the personal and political characteristics of the minister affect the length of ministerial tenure in Korea. In contrast, the characteristics of the secretary do not affect the length of secretarial tenure in the United States. However, the characteristics of the president do have an impact on the tenure length of cabinet members in both Korea and the United States.

The rest of this article is organized as follows. The next section outlines theoretical arguments and describes a study design for testing the theory. The subsequent section provides a descriptive analysis of ministerial composition in Korea and secretarial

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1. In the United States, holders of posts equivalent to ministers are called secretaries.

composition in the United States and examines the effects of individual characteristics on hazard rates using the proportional hazards model. The last section discusses findings and implications.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **Theoretical Background and Hypothesis**

There are significant differences between a presidential system and a parliamentary system. One lies in the relationship among members of the cabinet. Many developed democracies have a parliamentary system, but Korea has a presidential system, which bears some similarity to the U.S. presidential system. When the National Assembly drew up the Korean Constitution in 1948, the U.S. army military government in Korea and Rhee Syngman, who worked for the independence of Korea from Japan for almost 40 years in the United States, convinced assemblymen to adopt a presidential system like that of the United States, which had been shaped by the U.S. Constitution (Constitutional Court of Korea, 2014).

But there are important differences between the political system of Korea and that of the United States. The term of office for the U.S. president is four years, and the president can only serve two terms (Peabody & Gant, 1999). The United States Congress is a bicameral legislature. In addition and most importantly, the federal system prescribed by the Constitution is the dominant feature of the U.S. governmental system. However, the presidential system of Korea has undergone several changes due to constitutional amendments. The president of Korea has been elected by direct popular vote for a single five-year term since 1987.<sup>2</sup> Before the constitutional amendment in 1987, the president could be reelected, and the presidential terms varied from four to seven years. In addition, Korea has a unicameral legislature.

A variety of factors may affect the length of tenure of cabinet members. Cohen (1986) argues that while the characteristics of U.S. secretaries have little effect on their tenure, the characteristics of the president have a significant effect on it. Berlinski, Dewan, and Dowding (2007) divide factors related to cabinet members into two categories: personal characteristics and political characteristics.

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2. See articles 67 and 70 of the Korean Constitution.

### Personal Characteristics of the Cabinet Member

First, the personal characteristics of the cabinet member appointed by the president may affect the length of tenure. A minister's performance is closely tied to his or her ability, and that ability would be indirectly related to the characteristics of the minister. Though the definition of a capable minister is a matter of debate, the characteristics of the minister, such as age, gender, educational background, and career pattern may affect the minister's ability to perform. And thus, the characteristics of the minister may have an impact on ministerial tenure (Cohen, 1986; Berlinski, Dewan & Dowding, 2007). Following Berlinski, Dewan and Dowding (2007), this article splits the characteristics of the minister into two categories, considering factors such as age, gender, experience in the law, work experience in the ministry in question, work experience in another ministries, management experience in the private sector, research experience in academia, and experience in journalism as the personal characteristics of the cabinet members.<sup>3</sup>

For example, in the 1960s, the age of Korean ministers tended to be lower because large numbers of young military personnel entered the cabinet. However, since democratization, the age of ministers has tended to be higher. The length of tenure of old ministers who have a wide range of experience can be compared to that of ambitious young ministers who have introduced innovative policy initiatives. To take another example, the number of female cabinet members has been gradually increasing in both Korea and the United States. It is a matter of interest whether the tenure length of female cabinet members will be longer than that of male cabinet members (Berlinski, Dewan & Dowding, 2007).

Experience in the government sector and qualification as a lawyer are also noteworthy factors. Of 30 ministers and presidential staff who were initially appointed by the Park Geun-hye administration, there were 14 people with bureaucratic experience, and five people who had legal qualifications.<sup>4</sup> As the private sector in Korea has grown, in many cases prominent CEOs of companies have been appointed as ministers.<sup>5</sup>

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3. Berlinski, Dewan, and Dowding (2007) regard age and gender as the main social demographic characteristics defining the personal characteristics of the minister. Hecló (1978) divides the career path of ministers into four areas: the private sector, academia, bureaucracy, and elected office. Cohen (1986) separates the legal sector from the private sector, and Hahm, Jung, and Lee (2013) separately consider experience in journalism. In addition, Lewis (2008) divides high-ranking officials' experience in government into experience in the given ministry as well as in other ministries.

4. "Male officials from Seoul National University, Sungkyunkwan University, hold a large majority," *Hankook ilbo*, February 21, 2013.

In the United States, there have been a lot of secretaries who were recruited from the private sector, but more CEOs were appointed to the cabinet in the George W. Bush administration than in others (Micklethwait & Wooldridge, 2004).<sup>6</sup> In addition, scholars who have committed themselves to research in universities or other institutions and journalists who have had extensive experience reporting on public affairs have joined cabinets. It is necessary to analyze whether they are able to perform ministerial tasks that are significantly different from their original jobs.

### Political Characteristics of the Cabinet Member

Political characteristics of the cabinet member may likewise affect the length of tenure. Berlinski, Dewan, and Dowding (2007) analyze the effects of the political characteristics of the minister, such as the role a minister may have had in the cabinet before assuming his or her current position, the rank of the minister in the cabinet, and whether he or she has been an unelected peer. Modifying the framework of their analysis, this article adds legislative experiences in congress, experiences as a head of local government or as a local councilor, experiences as a member of a presidential staff, and experiences as a cabinet member to the list of variables.<sup>7</sup>

Experiences in the legislative branch and local government certainly count as political characteristics. Experiences as an elected member of the legislative branch can prepare a cabinet member to tackle a wide range of administrative tasks and political issues. In principle, members of the legislative branch hold ministerial offices in the parliamentary system. It is an open question how experience as an elected member of the legislative branch may affect the performance of cabinet members in the presidential system that Korea and the United States adopt. Experience as a head of local government or as a local councilor should have an impact on a minister's capabilities, since a local government can be regarded as a microcosm of the national administration. Moreover, heads of local government and local councilors provide checks on each other, politically negotiating and compromising. It is a matter of interest whether these political experiences affect the length of tenure of cabinet members.

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5. "Minister Namgoong Suek: A computer professional experienced in Hyundai Electronics and Samsung SDS," *Maeil Business*, December 22, 1998; "Star CEO Chin Dae-je, communication minister," *Korea Economic Daily*, February 28, 2003.

6. George W. Bush was the first U.S. president with an MBA, and he appointed three secretaries who were ex-chief executives in his first cabinet.

7. Berlinski, Dewan, & Dowding's (2007) analysis is based on the British parliamentary system. Consequently, their framework is not appropriate for the analysis of Korean ministers.

Moe (1985) argues that presidents appoint their staff and cabinet members using political criteria, and as a result, presidential staff and secretaries are highly politicized positions. In Korea and the United States, as the influence of the presidential staff has steadily grown, the number of ministers who have experience as members of a presidential staff has risen (Jung, 2001; Park, 2007).<sup>8</sup> It is common for them to have personally intimate relationships with the president and to communicate with the president based on the knowledge of work processes that they have acquired. In Korea, it often happens that one minister moves to the position of another minister. This state of affairs has been heavily criticized, referred to as “revolving door appointments” by the media. Berlinski, Dewan, and Dowding (2007) regard a minister’s previous work in the cabinet as a vital variable among the political characteristics. Cabinet ministers undertake tasks not only to lead their own ministry but also to assist the president. Therefore, the duties of ministers can be politically oriented (Keman, 1991; Marsh & Smith, 2000; Jung, Moon & Hahm, 2008).

### Characteristics of the President

The power to appoint cabinet members is granted to the president, and so the characteristics related to the president can play a significant role in the tenure length of cabinet members. In this article, variables such as the president’s term, the time during the presidency at which the president appoints the minister, the president’s ideology, whether the president and the cabinet member come from the same region or not, the president’s share of votes earned in the presidential election, and the ruling party’s proportion of seats in the legislature are reviewed.

For example, Cohen (1986) shows that whether the president is newly elected or reelected affects the tenure length of secretaries. Berlinski, Dewan, and Dowding (2007) analyze the tenure length of ministers in relation to the term currently being served by the prime minister. They find that when the prime minister is in the second or third term, the tenure length of ministers tends to be shorter.

Next, the time during the presidency at which the president appoints a cabinet member is one of the characteristics related to the president. Light (1982) points out

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8. For example, U.S. national security advisor Henry Kissinger was appointed as the secretary of state in 1973. Many years later, President Nixon admitted that he had not wanted to appoint Henry Kissinger as secretary of state. For one, Nixon thought that the position called for someone with economic expertise, and he felt that while Kissinger had no competitors in geopolitics, he was weak on economics. For another, Nixon believed that Kissinger was better at dealing with big issues than managing the department of state (Isaacson, 1992).

that the president has enormous capital at the beginning of the presidency. In particular, presidential power is the strongest in the “honeymoon” period. Thus, the president wants to control bureaucrats in accordance with the new government policy goals in the early stage of the presidency.

The ideology of the president is another variable that may be related to the tenure length of cabinet members. In other words, whether the president has conservative or liberal tendencies can play a role in the tenure length of cabinet members. Lewis (2008) uses the ideological tendency of the president as one of variables in analyzing political appointment of bureaucrats. However, because it is difficult to measure the president’s ideology accurately, Berlinski, Dewan, and Dowding (2007) consider the party to which the prime minister belongs as a factor that can affect the tenure length of ministers.

Whether the president and the cabinet member come from the same region or not can also affect the tenure length of cabinet members (Cohen, 1986). Korean administrations have often faced criticism for the large number of ministers from the president’s home province who are appointed to the cabinet. It is necessary to analyze the tenure length of those ministers as compared to the tenure length of ministers from other regions.

The popularity of the president can be a variable that may affect the tenure length of cabinet members (Wood & Marchbanks, 2008). Because it is difficult to measure the degree of a president’s popularity, Cohen (1986) uses the president’s success or failure as a variable. Krause & Cohen (1997) measure the president’s popularity by using presidential approval ratings in Gallup polls. However, in Korea it is very difficult to find objective indicators that can measure the popularity of a president. Therefore, this article measures the share of votes a president won in the presidential election.

The proportion of congressional seats that are occupied by the ruling party can affect the tenure length of cabinet members, which is a similar variable to that of the popularity of the president. The ruling party to which the president belongs supports the president in the face of the opposition party in the legislature. Wood & Marchbanks (2008) argue that if conflicts between the executive branch and the legislative branch become larger, the tenure length of political appointees decreases. On the other hand, Berlinski, Dewan, and Dowding (2007) show that whether the ruling party occupies more than 55% of parliamentary seats does not affect the tenure length of ministers.

## METHODS OF ANALYSIS

### Data Collection

This article gathered data on the 953 Korean ministers and the 259 U.S. secretaries who were between August 1948 and January 2013.<sup>9</sup> In the case of Korea, the range of the analysis includes ministers appointed from the Rhee Syngman administration in August 1948 to the end of the Lee Myung-bak administration in 2013. Korean ministers are appointed by the president with the prime minister's recommendation. However, following the National Assembly confirmation hearing process that was adopted in 2005, the National Assembly must hold a hearing before the president's appointment.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, there the president's appointment does not have to be ratified by the National Assembly, and the hearing reports are not legally binding (Choi & Lee, 2006).

In the case of the United States, the range of the analysis includes secretaries appointed from the Truman administration in 1948 to the first term of the Obama administration in 2013. The U.S. Constitution does not specifically address the topic of the cabinet and secretaries. However, it does state that the principal officials of the government should be appointed by the president with the advice and consent of the Senate. After a hearing of the Senate and securing approval from a majority of the total members in plenary sessions, the ratification is finalized (Choi & Lee, 2006). In other words, the U.S. president's appointment of secretaries requires the Senate's consent. This is a major difference between Korea and the U.S.

Profiles of Korean ministers are provided by newspapers such as *Dong-a ilbo*, *Hankook ilbo*, *Maeil Business*, and *Hankyoreh*. In addition, profiles of ministers can be obtained through the ministry's website, and those of ministers who have experience as legislators can be found on the website of the Parliamentarian's Society of the Republic of Korea. Plus, this article makes a database of Korean minister profiles, referring to the *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture* published by the Academy of Korean Studies. Profile databases of secretaries of the United States are mainly based on the data of Grossman (2010). Grossman provides profiles of the U.S. secretaries from 1789 to 2010. This article also gathered profiles of secretaries through the websites of the U.S. government.

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9. Opinions are divided on the scope of the category of minister. In this article, the category is limited to Korean cabinet members and heads of U.S. federal executive departments in the cabinet.

10. See article 94 of the Korean Constitution, article 31-2 of the State Public Officials Act.



### Study Design: The Proportional Hazards Model<sup>11</sup>

The factors that affect the tenure length of cabinet members can be used to design an empirical model that can be represented by the following equation.

$$T_{ipf} = \alpha + X_{ip}\beta' + Z_{ipf}\gamma' + \varepsilon_{ipf},$$

where  $T_{ipf}$  is the tenure length of cabinet member  $i$  at time  $f$  in government  $p$ ,  $X_{ip}$  is the personal and political characteristics of cabinet member at the start of his or her tenure, and  $Z_{ipf}$  is the performance vector during and the end of his or her tenure. Because the performance of a cabinet member is related to his or her personal and political characteristics and to the president's characteristics,  $Z$  is implicitly a function of  $X$ . Thus, the characteristics of the cabinet member and the president affect the tenure length of cabinet member directly by the vector  $\beta'$  and indirectly by  $Z$ .

Although a model in which the tenure length of cabinet members is linearly related to the characteristics of the cabinet member and the president is suggested, there is a limit to ordinary least-squares regression when the length of time is a dependent variable. In other words, because the tenure length of cabinet member becomes a dependent variable, we cannot assume that errors follow a normal distribution. In order to address this problem, duration models can be used (Box-Steffensmeier & Johns, 1997). The duration model concentrates on the hazard rate, which in our case would be the immediate risk of a cabinet member's term ending. In this model, the hazard ratio becomes a dependent variable, and factors that may affect the hazard ratio act as independent variables for regression analysis.

This study uses the proportional hazards model of Cox (1972). In medical statistics, the purpose of the model is to explore the relationship between the survival of a patient and some variables. Here we replace the survival of a patient with the survival of a cabinet member. For the purposes of analyzing the tenure length of cabinet members, the hazard ratio of the proportional hazards model means the probability of the cabinet member's tenure ending. For example, the hazard ratio of cabinet member  $i$  in government  $p$  can be represented by the following equation.

$$\lambda_{ipt} = \lambda_0(t) \times \exp(X_{ip}\theta')$$

In this equation,  $\lambda_0(t)$  is the hazard ratio when all measurements of the characteristics that may affect the tenure of cabinet member are 0, so it is the baseline hazard of the

11. See the analysis model of Berlinski, Dewan, and Dowding (2007).

cabinet member at the time of  $t$ ;  $X$  is a vector related to the personal and political characteristics of the cabinet member and to the characteristics of the president. The vector  $\theta$  used here is derived from estimating the effect of the personal and political characteristics of the cabinet member and the characteristics of the president. For the statistical analysis, PASW statistics 18.0 package was used.

## RESULTS OF EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

### Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 shows the basic descriptive statistics of the 953 ministers of Korea and the 259 secretaries of the United States from 1948 to 2013. The average tenure of ministers in Korea is 13.84 months, but the average tenure of secretaries in the United States is 35.89 months. The maximum tenure is 90 months in Korea and 96 months in the United States. The minimum tenure is one month in both Korea and the United States.<sup>12</sup> In Korea, the percentage of ministers who served the minimum is 6.4%, compared to 1.2% in the United States.

**Table 1.** Variables and Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Definition	Unit	Mean (std. dev.)	
			Korea	U.S.
Tenure length	Period served as a cabinet member	Month	13.84 (10.85)	35.89 (21.81)
Age	Age	Year	53.58 (6.57)	53.44 (7.68)
Gender	Gender	Female=1, male=0	0.04	0.10
Lawyer	Whether qualified to practice law	Yes=1, no=0	0.10	0.48
Ministry/ Department	Whether has previous work experience in the ministry/ department	Yes=1, no=0	0.39	0.34
Other ministries/ departments	Whether has work experience in other ministries/departments	Yes=1, no=0	0.57	0.44

12. If the minister's tenure was less than one month, it is treated as one month.

Variable	Definition	Unit	Mean (std. dev.)	
			Korea	U.S.
Private sector	Whether has work experience in the private sector	Yes=1, no=0	0.14	0.46
Academia	Whether has research experience in universities or other institutions	Yes=1, no=0	0.22	0.19
Journalism	Whether has experience as a journalist	Yes=1, no=0	0.08	0.02
Legislature	Experience as a member of the National Assembly (Korea), experience as a member of Senate and House (U.S.)	Number of terms (Korea), years served (U.S.) <sup>13</sup>	0.62 (1.16)	1.96 (5.23)
Local government	Whether has experience as a head of local government or as a local councilor <sup>14</sup>	Yes=1, no=0	0.13	0.24
Presidential staff	Whether has experiences as a presidential staff member	Yes=1, no=0	0.23	0.15
Cabinet member	Whether has experience as a minister/secretary	Yes=1, no=0	0.22	0.07
Term	Term currently being served by the president	First term=0, second and more term=1	0.29	0.32
Appointment timing	Years served by the appointing president	Year <sup>15</sup>	1.41 (1.53)	0.71 (1.06)
President's ideology	President's political leanings	Liberal=1, conservative=0	0.22	0.43
Region	Whether the president and the cabinet member come from the same region	Yes=1, no=0	0.20	0.21
Presidential election	President's share of votes earned in the presidential election	Percentage (%)	60.35 (22.57)	51.92 (5.38)
The ruling party	Proportion of seats of the ruling party in the congress	Percentage (%)	52.56 (12.98)	50.18 (9.35)

13. While Korea has a unicameral parliament system, the United States has a bicameral system. Korean national assemblymen and assemblywomen serve four-year terms. U.S. senators serve for a term of six years, and U.S. congressmen and congresswomen serve a term of two years. For this reason, it is not reasonable if the number of terms is used to gauge experience in the legislative branch in the United States. Thus, for the United States, the total number of years served as a legislator is used as a measurement. However, if the period is less than

Average age is 53.58 years old in Korea and 53.44 years in the United States. The percentage of Korean female ministers is 4%, and that of female secretaries in the United States is 10%. On average, 10% of Korean ministers have been qualified as lawyers and 14% of Korean ministers have management experience in the private sector. In the U.S., 48% of secretaries have legal qualifications, and 46% have experience in the private sector.

As for political characteristics of cabinet members, 13% of Korean ministers and 24% of U.S. secretaries have experience in local government. On the other hand, 22% of Korean ministers have experience as a minister, compared to only 7% of U.S. secretaries.

With this data, we can also calculate basic statistics pertaining to the characteristics of a president. For instance, 29% of Korean ministers are appointed after the second or greater term of the presidency, while 32% of U.S. secretaries are. On average, 22% of Korean ministers have been appointed by a liberal president. This compares with 43% of U.S. secretaries appointed by liberal president.

The number of presidents that served during the period analyzed is 10 in Korea and 12 in the United States. The characteristics of cabinet members under these presidents are summarized in table 2 and table 3. In Korea, as shown in table 2, the longest average ministerial tenure is 18.83 months in the Park Chung-hee administration, and the shortest is 3.18 months in the Yun Bo-seon administration. The highest average age is 58.65 years old during the Kim Dae-jung administration, and the lowest is 48.35 years old in the Park Chung-hee administration. There were no female ministers in the Yun Bo-seon administration or the Park Chung-hee administration. The most extensive experience as legislators is shown in the Yun Bo-seon administration, during which the ministers had an average of 2.44 terms served as assemblymen.

In the United States (table 3), the longest average tenure of secretaries is 54.92 months in the Kennedy administration, and the shortest is 13.33 months in the Ford administration. The highest average age is 57.19 years old in the Obama administration, and the lowest is 47.46 years old in the Kennedy administration. There were no female secretaries in the Truman, Kennedy, Johnson, or Nixon administrations. The secretaries in the George H. W. Bush administration show the widest experience as

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one year, it is considered as one year.

14. The concept of local autonomy in the United States is very different from that in Korea. In this study, a governor of a state in the United States is considered as one of the heads of local government. And experience as local councilors includes experience as state legislators.
15. The ordinal number of the year in which the president appointed the cabinet member is displayed. For example, the first year of the presidency = 0, and the second year of the presidency = 1.

**Table 2.** Average Characteristics of Ministers by Government in Korea

Variable	Rhee Syngman	Yun Bo-seon	Park Chung-hee	Choi Kyu-hah	Chun Doo-hwan
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Tenure length	12.80	3.18	18.83	9.32	16.58
Age	51.90	53.94	48.35	54.50	52.12
Female	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.01
Lawyer	0.12	0.12	0.14	0.07	0.07
Ministry	0.42	0.32	0.38	0.32	0.38
Other ministries	0.54	0.62	0.78	0.79	0.63
Private sector	0.23	0.18	0.08	0.14	0.16
Academia	0.23	0.12	0.24	0.32	0.18
Journalism	0.04	0.21	0.05	0.07	0.08
Legislature	0.25	2.44	0.38	0.14	0.52
Local government	0.16	0.29	0.12	0.07	0.18
Presidential staff	0.02	0.00	0.13	0.18	0.28
Minister	0.17	0.29	0.30	0.18	0.24
Region	0.37	0.09	0.12	0.04	0.27
Observations	132	34	206	28	105

Variable	Roh Tae-woo	Kim Young-sam	Kim Dae-jung	Roh Moo-hyun	Lee Myung-bak
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Tenure length	11.98	10.46	10.81	13.95	17.37
Age	55.95	56.03	58.65	55.69	58.02
Female	0.04	0.07	0.06	0.08	0.15
Lawyer	0.10	0.07	0.10	0.08	0.08
Ministry	0.34	0.34	0.45	0.44	0.46
Other ministries	0.58	0.45	0.42	0.35	0.33
Private sector	0.08	0.08	0.19	0.19	0.12
Academia	0.21	0.23	0.20	0.22	0.25
Journalism	0.15	0.17	0.01	0.05	0.06
Legislature	0.87	0.96	0.66	0.36	0.73
Local government	0.13	0.14	0.06	0.04	0.10
Presidential staff	0.34	0.32	0.31	0.35	0.40
Minister	0.19	0.26	0.18	0.13	0.08
Region	0.19	0.18	0.22	0.18	0.21
Observations	107	116	96	77	52

**Table 3.** Average Characteristics of Secretaries by Government in the United States

Variable	Truman	Eisenhower	Kennedy	Johnson	Nixon	Ford
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Tenure length	37.81	46.70	54.92	18.40	28.71	13.33
Age	53.75	55.15	47.46	49.93	51.90	51.08
Female	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.08
Lawyer	0.50	0.35	0.62	0.40	0.39	0.50
Department	0.75	0.30	0.23	0.67	0.32	0.33
Other departments	0.50	0.40	0.46	0.40	0.35	0.58
Private sector	0.31	0.70	0.38	0.60	0.42	0.42
Academia	0.00	0.10	0.23	0.33	0.23	0.25
Journalism	0.00	0.20	0.08	0.00	0.00	0.00
Legislature	0.50	0.65	0.77	0.13	0.94	1.50
Local government	0.25	0.35	0.31	0.00	0.29	0.17
Presidential staff	0.06	0.05	0.00	0.20	0.06	0.17
Secretary	0.13	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.13	0.17
Region	0.13	0.10	0.23	0.20	0.16	0.17
Observations	16	20	13	15	31	12

Variable	Carter	Reagan	George H. W. Bush	Clinton	George W. Bush	Obama
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Tenure length	25.73	40.09	29.39	44.69	40.68	40.40
Age	52.23	54.12	54.00	52.72	57.00	57.19
Female	0.23	0.09	0.11	0.17	0.18	0.25
Lawyer	0.64	0.45	0.33	0.66	0.44	0.50
Department	0.18	0.30	0.17	0.38	0.26	0.31
Other departments	0.45	0.48	0.56	0.24	0.56	0.31
Private sector	0.32	0.58	0.50	0.48	0.50	0.19
Academia	0.32	0.15	0.17	0.17	0.21	0.19
Journalism	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Legislature	1.77	1.55	5.56	4.55	1.65	3.13
Local government	0.18	0.12	0.28	0.24	0.26	0.38
Presidential staff	0.05	0.21	0.44	0.14	0.24	0.19
Secretary	0.14	0.09	0.11	0.03	0.06	0.00
Region	0.14	0.33	0.33	0.24	0.15	0.38
Observations	22	33	18	29	34	16

legislators, during which the secretaries had an average of 5.56 years of experience as a congressman or congresswoman.

### The Proportional Hazards Model Analysis

According to the three hypotheses set above, the personal and political characteristics of the cabinet member and the characteristics of the president may affect the hazard ratios for the tenure of cabinet member. If the hazard ratio is higher, the tenure of cabinet member will be shorter, while if the hazard ratio is lower, the tenure of cabinet member will become longer. Table 4 provides the results of the hazard ratios for the tenure of cabinet member.

**Table 4.** The Determinants of Ministerial/Secretarial Tenures: Hazard Ratios from Cox Models

Characteristics	Variable	Korea	United States
Personal characteristics of cabinet member	Age	1.099 (0.006)	0.999 (0.010)
	Gender	0.784 (0.178)	0.864 (0.227)
	Lawyer	1.158 (0.111)	1.042 (0.153)
	Ministry / Department	0.853 (0.075)*	1.081 (0.156)
	Other ministries / Other departments	1.132 (0.082)	0.985 (0.142)
	Private sector	1.023 (0.099)	0.843 (0.156)
	Academia	0.945 (0.087)	0.908 (0.178)
	Journalism	0.815 (0.128)	0.491 (0.527)
Political characteristics of cabinet member	Legislature	1.111 (0.031)**	1.020 (0.013)
	Local government	1.377 (0.103)**	0.911 (0.175)
	Presidential staff	0.921 (0.083)	1.155 (0.200)
	Minister / Secretary	1.122 (0.090)	1.466 (0.276)
Characteristics of president	Term	0.490 (0.100)**	1.588 (0.172)**
	Appointment timing	1.093 (0.025)**	1.429 (0.074)**
	Ideology	1.269 (0.090)**	0.929 (0.199)
	Region	1.006 (0.083)	0.834 (0.170)
	Presidential election	1.003 (0.003)	1.042 (0.016)*
	Ruling party	1.003 (0.002)	1.009 (0.012)
Observations		953	259

Standard deviation is given in parentheses. \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

See table 1 for units and measurement of the variables.

## Factors Affecting the Tenure of Ministers in Korea

As shown in table 4, the personal and political characteristics of Korean ministers and the characteristics of a president have statistically significant effects on their tenure.

First, among the personal characteristics of ministers, previous work experience in the ministry to which the minister belongs affects the length of ministerial tenure. Ministers who have work experience in the ministry have a hazard rate that is 15% lower than those who do not. In other words, the ministers who have previous experience in the ministry to which they belong tend to have longer tenures. Also, the average tenure of ministers who have experience in the ministry is 14.67 months, but that of ministers who do not is 13.31 months. If ministers have experience in their ministry before the appointment, it is likely that they have strong expertise in the field. In addition, it might be easier for the minister to lead and control the ministry because he or she is familiar with the organization and its personnel.

Second, among the political characteristics of minister, experience as a legislator and a head of local government affects the length of ministerial tenure. If the minister has served one more term as a member of the National Assembly, the hazard rate becomes 11% higher. In other words, the more times a minister has been elected as a legislator, the shorter his or her ministerial tenure becomes. The average tenure of ministers who have served in the National Assembly is only 11.37 months, whereas that of ministers who have not is 14.79 months. Although the Korean Constitution is based on the presidential system, it has elements of the parliamentary system, one feature of which is allowing a legislator to hold ministerial offices.<sup>16</sup> Thus, a large number of members of the National Assembly want to gain experience in the executive branch, since it can be a springboard to a higher political career. However, there can be harmful side effects if legislators hold offices in the cabinet, since they are likely to perform ministerial duties with an eye to procuring political advantages. A president may prefer ministers who perform their duties in line with his or her wishes to those who act in light of their own politics. In addition, ministers who have been members of the National Assembly tend to resign during their tenure in order to run for office (Sung, 2014).

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16. Article 43 of the Korean constitution provides that members of the National Assembly shall not concurrently hold any other office prescribed by act, and article 29 of the National Assembly Act lists the offices that may not be concurrently held. However, cabinet members may hold the position of the national assemblyman or assemblywoman concurrently, because it is not listed in article 29.



The hazard rates of ministers who have experience in local government are 38% higher than those who do not. Like those ministers with legislative experience, ministers who have experience as heads of local government or as local councilors tend to be politically motivated. The average tenure of ministers who have experience in local government is 11.09 months, which compares with the 14.23 months of ministers who do not have experience in local government. A head of local government wields immense power, so much as to be called “the lord of the region.”<sup>17</sup> It is common for ministers who have experience as heads of local government or as local councilors to think of the position of minister as an opportunity to build their political careers and leap into higher positions, which suggests that the political ambitions of a minister may have adverse effects on ministerial tenure.

Third, the characteristics of the president who appoints ministers affect the length of ministerial tenure. Among the characteristics related to the president, the president’s term, the time during the presidency at which a minister is appointed, and the ideology of the president affect the hazard rate. In particular, whether the president is in the first or second or additional term makes a significant difference. If the president is in the second or more term, the hazard rate is 51% lower than for a president in the first term. This difference may result from the institutional factor of the political system. The Korean Constitution has been amended several times related to the political system. After it was amended in 1987, presidents could not be reelected. Thus, the characteristics of the single-term presidency system may affect the relatively short tenure of ministers in Korea.

In addition, once the term of the presidency exceeds one year, the hazard rate of ministers increases 9%. This shows that ministers who are appointed at the beginning of the president’s term tend to have longer tenures than ministers appointed later. In Korea, presidential terms vary from four to seven years due to the constitutional amendments. The tenure of ministers can be affected by the length of the presidential term. Consequently, the term of the presidency may be an institutional factor that affects the tenure of ministers.

The ideology of the president also affects the hazard rate of a minister’s tenure. The hazard rate of ministers appointed by a president who belongs to a relatively liberal party is 27% higher than those appointed by a conservative president. In this study, only three presidents, Yun Bo-seon, Kim Dae-jung, Roh Moo-hyun, belong to liberal parties, and the average ministerial tenure of Yun Bo-seon’s presidency was only 3.18 months. These facts may make it seem like the tenure of ministers in liberal governments

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17. “Head of local government has enormous power but no responsibility,” *Yonhap News*, April 21, 2010.

is shorter than in fact it is.

To summarize, in Korea, three attributes including the personal and political characteristics of minister, and the characteristics of president affect the hazard rate of a minister's tenure.

### **Factors Affecting the Tenure of Secretaries in the United States**

Table 4 shows the results of the analysis of secretarial tenure in the United States as well. In the United States, only the characteristics of the president among the three characteristics affect the tenure of secretaries.

First, none of the eight variables pertaining to the personal characteristics of a secretary (including age, gender, legal qualifications, experience in the department or other departments, and experience in the private sector, academia, and journalism) affect the hazard rate.

Second, the political characteristics of secretaries do not affect their tenure. Although experiences in the National Assembly and local government increase the hazard rate for Korean ministers, these factors do not significantly affect secretarial tenure in the United States.

Third, as in Korea, the characteristics related to the president have an impact on the tenure of secretaries. Among the variables of the characteristics related to the president, the president's term, the point during the presidency at which the secretary is appointed, and the president's earned share of votes in the presidential election affect the length of secretarial tenure.

The hazard rate of secretaries who are appointed by a president in the second term is 59% higher than that of secretaries appointed by a president in the first term. Since the U.S. Constitution allows for the reelection of the president, a president in the first term usually spends a fair amount of time preparing for the next presidential election. As a result, the lame-duck period of a president in the first term tends to be relatively short. If the president succeeds in getting reelected, secretaries will get another political opportunity. For this reason, secretaries will do their best to perform their duties until the president launches the reelection campaign. This could be an important cause of the longer tenure of secretaries appointed by a president in the first term. On the other hand, a president in the second term can quickly enter a lame-duck period because the president's third term is prohibited by the U.S. Constitution. This may have an impact on the tenure of secretaries appointed by a president in the second term.

In addition, as the years of a president's term pass, the hazard rate of secretaries increases by 43%. Compared to the hazard rate of Korean ministers, which increases 9% annually, the hazard rate of secretaries is much. The average tenure of secretaries

in the United States is 35.89 months, which amounts to just about 12 months less than the 48 months of a presidential term. These high average tenures of secretaries implies that a significant number of secretaries keep their position during the four-year presidency. It can be inferred that if the secretary is replaced in the middle of the presidential term, the newly appointed secretary usually leaves the position at the end of the president's term.

Finally, a remarkable result of the statistical analysis is that the hazard rate of secretaries increases 4.2% if the president wins a 1% higher share of the votes in the presidential election. This result suggests that the president who is supported by a number of groups may need to politically compensate these supporters. The secretary is a top-level position that is bestowed as a reward for political support. The president may consider frequent cabinet reshuffles if the president has a large number of personnel to be politically taken care of.

## CONCLUSION

To sum up, a number of personal and political characteristics of cabinet members affect their tenure in Korea, while they do not affect their tenure in the United States, a difference that perhaps owes to the fact Korea's political system is a mixed presidential-parliamentary one. It is noteworthy that the analysis of the tenure of ministers in Britain, which has a parliamentary system, likewise concludes that the personal and political characteristics of ministers affect their tenure (Berlinski, Dewan, & Dowding, 2007).

There are some positive aspects of a short tenure for cabinet members. Frequent cabinet reshuffles mean that the government is more likely to take responsibility for policy failures and pay heed to people's urgent needs. However, short terms may trigger political instability and frequent policy changes. This may also exacerbate the public's distrust in government. There is a possibility that a vicious cycle will emerge. Thus, the excessively short tenure of Korean ministers may be a cause for concern.

The findings of this article may be limited owing to the inherent limitations of statistical analysis. There is important information that can be missed by quantitative methods. Qualitative factors such as the government's policy failures and social crises or unrest may affect the tenure of cabinet members, but they are difficult to capture in the form of quantitative variables. Furthermore, there are limitations on collecting data. Because a credible database of the personal data of cabinet members is difficult to compile, the profiles an analysis such as this draws on may not be accurate.

However, this article does make it clear that the theories and practices of public

administration and political science in the United States may not be applicable in Korea. In the future, a more expansive framework that would explain the tenure of Korean ministers in more detail needs to be developed. This article can serve as a foundation for future studies.

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